

**AB&I'S
100TH
YEAR!**

100 Years
Done



100 Years
Begun

ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

September 2006

AB&I Team Member Profile

Kurt Winter Looks Forward to Leading AB&I Into the Foundry's Second Century



"The biggest change I see in our business in the coming years is the way we manage and share data."

These words from AB&I's new president, Kurt Winter, set the tone for the manner in which AB&I will continue to grow and prosper in the 21st century.

The future will belong to the most efficient. That efficiency will come from retrieving and

analyzing production data, then making the necessary adjustments to improve and streamline production.

"Our challenge is to squeeze as much labor out of production as possible," says Winter. Toward that end, AB&I has made major investments in casting technology that enables the foundry to produce more and better castings in less time than ever before.

Kurt came to AB&I out of graduate school, and served in a variety of production capacities before joining the management team. It was during his time on the foundry floor that he gained an up-close appreciation for the

people of AB&I.

"We've got the best people in the foundry business," says Kurt. "We've given these people new tools, and they've taken us from being a good foundry to being world class."

When asked why AB&I has survived for a full century, while others have gone by

the wayside, Kurt is quick to point back to the AB&I team members. "The work ethic and loyalty that our team shows just blew me away when I first started at AB&I," says Kurt, "and it still impresses me today."

Being focused on the business side of AB&I, Kurt remains driven by the bottom line. "We are fully committed to staying competitive with any foundry, anywhere in the world," he says. "Even though the playing field isn't always level, our efficiency enables us to compete against foreign competitors and win."

Challenges? "Recruiting, hiring and training good people remains a top priority, as does continuing to focus on technology and data analysis to improve efficiency and keep," says Kurt.

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Perspective

When politicians talk about spending billions on this or that, just what does that mean?

Since it's an election year, maybe it's time to revisit the subject of government spending. It's a subject near and dear to my heart, since every time I think about how much I've paid out in taxes during my lifetime, I get a sharp pain in my chest.

Our leaders throw out dollar figures that have gotten so huge they become meaningless to us. In an effort to bring these numbers down to something we can comprehend, I want to share with you an analysis put together by an advertising agency and published on behalf of one of its clients. Ponder this.

A billion seconds ago, it was 1959.

A billion minutes ago, Jesus was alive.

A billion hours ago, our ancestors were living in the Stone Age.

A billion days ago, no one walked the earth on two feet.

A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes, at the rate our government is spending it.

I don't know about you, but for me, this put things into some pretty good perspective. Do our lawmakers, who pass all the spending bills that have put us so deeply in debt, fully comprehend the enormity of their actions? Somehow, I doubt it.

Consider the government's efforts to rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. We all feel sympathy for the people whose lives were so torn apart by the storm. Billions have already been spent on relocating, housing and feeding people uprooted by Katrina. Now, Senator Mary Landrieu (D., Louisiana), is asking Congress to approve \$250 billion in relief for her constituents. It's a big

number, but just what does it mean?

Well, if you were one of 484,674 residents of New Orleans (every man, woman, and child), you would each get \$516,528.

Or, if you have one of the 188,251 homes in New Orleans, your home gets \$1.33 million.

Or, if you are a family of four, your family gets \$2.07 million.

Are the people in Washington who are charged with spending our tax money paying attention to all this? Have they done the math? Are there calculators broken?

We all want to help, but is making every family in New Orleans a millionaire really what we should be doing? Remember, a billion minutes ago Jesus was plying our planet. Do we need to spend \$250 billion to get this job done?

Just a thought...

And while we're on the subject of taxes, I came across this list of different taxes that we pay. There are even more than I had considered:

Accounts Receivable Tax
Building Permit Tax
CDL License Tax
Cigarette Tax
Corporate Income Tax
Dog License Tax
Federal Income Tax
Federal Unemployment Tax
Fishing License Tax
Food License Tax
Fuel Permit Tax
Gasoline Tax
Hunting License Tax
Inheritance Tax
Inventory Tax

IRS Interest and Penalties

Liquor Tax

Luxury Tax

Marriage License Tax

Medicare Tax

Property Tax

Real Estate Tax

Social Security Tax

Road Usage Tax

Sales Tax

Recreational Vehicle Tax

School Tax

State Income Tax

State Unemployment Tax

Telephone Excise Tax

Utility Tax

Vehicle License Fee Tax

Watercraft Registration Tax

Well Permit Tax

Workers Compensation Tax

Not one of these taxes existed 100 years ago, when there was prosperity and absolutely no national debt.

Remember these taxes when you go to vote on election day.

I just read an interesting article about how Mark Twain lost the equivalent of \$4 million by investing in an invention that would change the printing industry. The loss came, not because the invention didn't work, but because the inventor kept tweaking the machine for 14 years, refusing to go to market until it was perfect. By the time they were ready for market, other companies had introduced functional, though inferior, technologies. We could all learn a lesson from Twain's loss. Sometimes it pays to pull the trigger to gain market share, then make improvements as needed. "Ready, fire, aim" isn't always a bad idea.

Gary Wickham Named Vice President for Sales, Reshuffles Sales Territories to Improve Service

AB&I has recently named Gary Wickham to the position of Vice President for National Sales.

Gary, widely known in the plumbing supplies business as a technical guru, comes to his new position after climbing the ladder within AB&I, starting first as a sales representative, then working his way up to his new position within the company.

"My job really hasn't changed that much," says Gary, who has long been involved with major decisions regarding sales and marketing within AB&I. "I'm still involved with customers and their day-to-day needs, only now I have more responsibility for strategic planning."

One of Gary's first moves was to work with AB&I president, Kurt Winter, in restructuring the sales team to provide even better service to AB&I customers.

"When Greg [Seiler] left the company, we decided to make all of our planned changes at one time, rather than to drag them out," said Gary.

Some territories will stay the same. For instance, Bob



Blomberg will continue to represent AB&I throughout Northern California, dispensing product information and golf tips to his growing list of distributors and contractor customers.

Michael Lowe, a six-year AB&I veteran, will be taking over sales responsibilities for Washington and Oregon. "We're committed to improving the level of service we provide to the Pacific Northwest," said Wickham.

Brennan Carpenter will now be calling exclusively on contractors and engineers throughout the Western United States.

Bill Woelke will be overseeing the AB&I rep network in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Arkansas, Ohio, Michigan and Louisiana.

In addition to his marketing duties, Gary Wickham will continue his sales function in Southern California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah.

"We're just reshuffling the deck," said Gary, "and doing a little reassigning with the goal of improving the level of service we provide, throughout the areas we serve."

Oops! Meyer Plumbing Brutally Ignored As 100 Year Old Company in Oakland

**100th
BIRTHDAY!**

Apologies to long-time and much-appreciated AB&I customer Meyer Plumbing of Oakland, who should have been named in the

August issue of this newsletter as an honored member of the select club of century-old California businesses.

Founded in 1906, Meyer Plumbing has operated as a family business since the beginning and, like AB&I, has weathered the numerous storms of the last century, including two world wars, a depression, several recessions, and numerous building boom/bust cycles. AB&I congratulates Meyer on their success and longevity, and promises not to leave them out of our 200th Anniversary issue of the *Items*.

Michael Lowe To Take Over Sales Role in Pacific Northwest



Former AB&I Human Resources Manager, Michael Lowe, has assumed full responsibility for managing the Pacific Northwest sales territory. This region consists of Washington and Oregon, important markets for AB&I.

"Michael's a great fit for this position," said AB&I's vice president of sales, Gary Wickham. "His sincere desire to do right by his customers will make him a standout performer."

"We needed somebody in Washington and Oregon who brings a service intensity to the territory," said Wickham. "We are fully committed to the Northwest, and are pleased that Michael will be our guy."

ATTN: Engineers and Specifiers



Come See Us at ASPE in Tampa in October!

If you're an engineer or other specifier and are planning to attend the ASPE Convention in Tampa on October 23,24, please drop by our booth (#1126).

On display will be our new redesigned booth, featuring an exhibit clarifying the new marking standard for cast iron soil pipe and fittings. This exhibit should remove any confusion about what the standard requires.

Also on display will be an exhibit detailing the many advantages of specifying only those cast iron DWV products that meet the various standards. The intent of the exhibits is to educate, not just tout the benefits of doing business with AB&I.

Gary Wickham, vice president of sales, will be on hand to answer questions and provide detailed information concerning the complete

line of AB&I cast iron pipe, fittings and no-hub couplings.

"This is a very well-attended show," said Wickham, "giving us a tremendous opportunity to tell the story of why domestic cast iron DWV should be the only material specified by plumbing engineers."

A specially-created exhibit will also demonstrate the efficiencies and cost savings to be had by using figure fittings for certain applications, instead of constructing complicated plumbing systems on site.

"We're finding that lots of plumbers and engineers have never used figure fittings, and are unsure of their application," said Wickham. "Our ASPE exhibit will show an actual figure fitting application, and hopefully encourage plumbing professionals to give them a try on their next appropriate job."



Just for Fun...

More Points to Ponder...

- If money doesn't grow on trees, why do banks have branches?
- Why do we say, "slept like a baby," when babies wake up every hour and a half?
- Why do we say alarm clocks "go off" when they start making noise?
- Why do they call it 'quicksand' when it sucks you down so slowly?
- When French people swear, do they say, "Pardon my English?"
- If everyone lost five pounds at the same time, would it throw the earth off its axis?
- What color hair do bald men put on their driver's licenses?
- How do you know when it's time to tune your bagpipes?



- If practice makes perfect, and nobody's perfect, why practice?
- Why do we "quiet down" before we can "listen up?"
- How did that "Keep Off the Grass" sign get there in the first place?

"A computer lets you make more mistakes faster than any invention in human history - with the possible exceptions of handguns and tequila."

-Mitch Ratliffe

How Do These People Survive?

An email crossed our desk recently, recounting stories of people who may qualify for the coveted Darwin Award someday. We're not sure they actually happened, but they could have, and that's good enough for us to publish them.



Recently, when I went to McDonald's, I saw on the menu that you could have an order of 6, 9, or 12 Chicken McNuggets. I asked for a half-dozen nuggets.

"We don't have a half-dozen nuggets," said the teenager at the counter. "We only have six, nine, or twelve," he explained.

"So I can't order a half-dozen nuggets, but I can order six?"

"That's right," was his patient reply.

So, I shook my head and ordered six McNuggets.

I was in a car dealership awhile ago, when a large motorhome was towed into the garage. The front of the vehicle was in dire need of repair, and the whole vehicle looked like it had been through a tornado. I asked the manager what had happened.

He told me that the driver had set the cruise control and then went in back to make a sandwich.

Ugh.

"Life is hard, but it's even harder when you're stupid."

-Anonymous smart guy